

## Changing Roles Webinar Series- Module 4



### Communicating with Interface Residents and Leaders



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## You can access these materials



- Module 4 of Changing Roles: Wildland-Urban Interface Professional Development Program
- Go to [www.interfacesouth.org](http://www.interfacesouth.org)
  - Resources
  - Changing Roles
  - Changing Roles Notebook
    - Module 4 – Fact Sheets and Exercises

## We communicate a lot!

- To share information and express ideas
- To let people know they've been heard
- To find out if we've been heard
- To celebrate and complain



As resource professionals, we communicate:

- What to do
- Why to do it
- Pros and cons of policies & regulations

## It can be critical to get it right

- To save time
- To save money
- To keep the public in the loop
- To keep the boss in the loop
- To improve perceptions of competence



## The goal

- Spread information?



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- Know they received it?



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- Know they received it?
- Understand what you intended to say



### The goal

- Spread information?
- Know they received it?
- Understand what you intended to say
- Confirming that would be great, but often not practical



### The interface brings challenges

- Audiences are more varied
- Issues may be contentious
- Audiences may not have experience or background knowledge
- Issues involve many aspects



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From your experiences, which challenges do you face in interface communications? Use the chat box and share your ideas.

### Three Common Challenges

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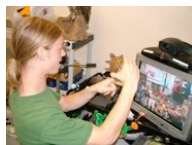
### Three Common Challenges

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- I explain important things and people don't believe me; they have other ideas
  - Scientific misconceptions



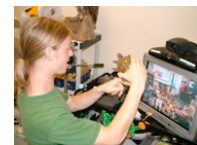
### Effective Communication

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- Communication is the successful transmission of thoughts or ideas, without significant distortion, so that understanding is achieved.
- We can work on both ends:
  - Effective transmission
    - The speaker and the message
  - Reception
    - The audience and environment



## Transmission

- Is the speaker credible and trustworthy



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## Transmission

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- Are the words easy to understand; is the message that is heard the same as the one transmitted?
- Is the channel reaching the right people?



## Reception

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- Is the audience comfortable?
- Is the information pitched appropriately – not too new, not too familiar, not too complicated, not too scary?
- Does the message relate to what the audience already knows and cares about? Is it meaningful and relevant?
- Does it conflict with what they care about?



## And how could you know?

Use the chat box to share how you could know if the speaker, the message, the audience, or the environment are appropriate to enhance communication.



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### Tip 2: Use the words that convey your meaning: When talking about wildlife

- **Endangered species** polarizes people and sets up potential conflict
- **Wildlife habitat** is a meaningful term for people who care about conservation
- **Protecting wildlife** is a phrase that many people find helpful, since animals can't speak for themselves



Image from: [www.psychologies.co.uk/var/inf\\_site/storage](http://www.psychologies.co.uk/var/inf_site/storage)

### Tip 2: About land conservation

- Avoid
- **Sprawl**
- **Open space**
- **Undeveloped land**
- **Conservation easement**
- **Buying development rights**
- **Working landscape**



Use

- **Poorly planned growth**
- **Natural areas**
- **Conservation agreement**
- **Working farms/forests**

From Fact Sheet 4.3

Image from: [lcl.ces.psu.edu/Research/sprawl.asp](http://lcl.ces.psu.edu/Research/sprawl.asp)

### Tip 3: Make it clear, simple, accurate, visual

- Attractive graphic design
- Interesting visuals
- Enough information for people to understand
- Yet not confusing
- Make it personally relevant



### If we can be effective...

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### But when it comes to getting people to change their behaviors...

- People may not want to listen!

### A few truths

- People usually don't change a habit if they don't want to
  - Attitudes
  - Knowledge of consequence

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- People usually don't change a habit if they don't want to
  - Attitudes
  - Knowledge of consequence
- People may not hear information about changing behaviors
  - Figure it out themselves
  - Care about it

### Tip 4: Use Questions

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- For example: On nuisance wildlife you could say –
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OR

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- Motivate your audience to think through a situation with questions – so they arrive at a new understanding
- For example: On nuisance wildlife you could say –
  - When do you see bears in your neighborhood?
  - What might be attracting them?

## Now you try

What question(s) could you ask to help your audience realize how to reduce their risk of fire around their house?

Exercise 4.3  
Questions to Build  
Understanding

## Another challenge

- Deciding to and changing a behavior is usually a function of more than information and understanding.
  - Attitudes
  - Imagery
  - Belief about effort
  - Knowing someone else
  - Believing that others care

## Tip 5: Provide more than info

- Use your communication opportunities to:



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  - Ask community leaders to help you
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  - Address consequences without generating fear
  - Engage them in discussions



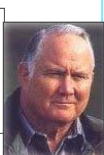
### Tip 5: Provide more than info

- Use your communication opportunities to:
  - Build imagery of possible solutions
  - Develop demonstration areas
  - Ask community leaders to help you
  - Set up the program with local leaders
  - Address consequences without generating fear
  - Engage them in discussions
  - Change the social norm!

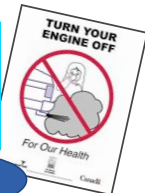


### Social Marketing may help

- Consider using prompts, testimonies, models, demonstrations, campaigns, community leaders, and obtaining commitment to move to change.



Fact Sheet  
4.10



### Tip 6: Avoid threats and fear

- Making the problem enormous does not generate a "we can fix this" attitude
- People avoid situations where bad things are going to happen

**JET SKIER KILLS  
BOY SCOUT !**



- **A smaller problem is easier to solve**
- **Provide techniques that can help**

But despite our best efforts to communicate about behavior change, sometimes people just don't believe your message.



But despite our best efforts to communicate, sometimes people just don't believe your message.

They have other ideas that you can't easily change.



### Scientific Misconceptions

- *Our summer is warm because we are closer to the sun*
- Underlying ideas about the world that prevent people from hearing and understanding new information
- New and conflicting information is discarded



### Domestic cats impact wildlife

- Cats kill songbirds and small mammals
- Considered second largest threat to birds
- ~ 100 million in US



### Cat owners think



- Because I feed my cat, my cat is not hungry and will not kill small birds and mammals.
- I'm a good cat owner.



### And cat owners react

- "My cat doesn't kill little animals."
- Don't tell me I'm a bad person.
- So they are offended and stop listening when the topic is raised. They believe they are not the audience for this information.

### Tip 7: Overcoming misconceptions

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Fact Sheet 4.7

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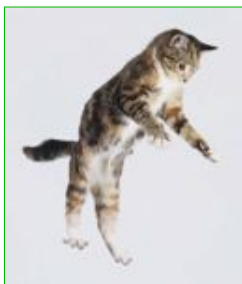
Fact Sheet 4.7

### Tip 7: Overcoming misconceptions

1. Understand what people are thinking
2. Acknowledge the truth in their thinking
3. Point out evidence to the contrary
4. Introduce an idea that explains all the evidence

Fact Sheet 4.7

### But they might realize



Cats pounce on strings and bottle caps, even when they are well fed.

### Your turn

If you work with people who believe converting wood to energy will cause air pollution (because they've seen smoke from forest fires), what is the first thing you might say?

### Need to acknowledge their perspective

- “You are right, forest fires are smoky, and so are campfires.”

Then what?



### Explain how forest fires are different from combustion chambers

- Moisture levels
- Fuel size
- Exposure to heat source
- Temperature of burn
- Open vs closed space



### Another challenge: Partial information

- People may have some knowledge about the topic
- Factual, but may not have been designed to convey “truth”
- Bits of information were selected to convey ideas to benefit one perspective



### Forests are better or worse?

- The US has more trees now than in 1920.

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### Forests now and the future?

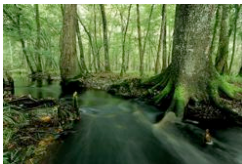
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- In the US, five trees are planted for every one harvested. Forests are healthy.
- Globally we are losing forests at a substantial rate -- 13 million hectares a year, an area about the size of England. Forests are in trouble.

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### All the bits are true

- But slightly incomplete, so that it is easy to be confused.
- Whether by accident or by strategy, a false understanding may be created that could be a challenge to address

### What's going on?

- Special interests are communicating their version of the problem
- News media selects opposing perspectives
- Ads, memberships, gifts, research funds are at stake
- The interested public gets confused



### Tip 8: Recognize partial info

- Recognize the partial bits that the audience has
- Explore whether your information may also be partial
- Provide more complete information as you would overcome a misconception

## So in summary

- You can improve your communication efforts in the wildland-urban interface by
  1. Learning more about the audience
  2. Using their needs, desires, interests to shape your agenda
  3. Using the words and visuals they understand
  4. Using questions to engage them
  5. Providing imagery and support for new actions
  6. Overcoming misconceptions and partial truths



Evidence	"People just don't understand"	"People don't want to hear my advice"	"People don't believe my information"
Problems	Effective Communication	Changing Behaviors	Scientific Misconceptions
Tips	1. Learn about the audience 2. Pick the right words 3. Make it clear, accurate, simple, visual	4. Use questions to help them see the answer 5. Provide more than info; change the norm 6. Avoid threats and fear	7. Overcome misconceptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand them</li> <li>• Agree with them</li> <li>• Challenge their ideas</li> <li>• Provide new information</li> </ul> 8. Overcome partial truths

## For more information

- Science Journalism and Misconceptions – Sharon Dunwoody, Univ of Wisconsin
- National Issues Forum – Kettering Foundation
- Social Marketing – Doug McKenzie-Mohr
- Reasonable Person Model – Steve and Rachel Kaplan, Univ of Michigan
- Theory of Planned Behavior – Ajzen and Fishbein
- Diffusion of Innovation – Everett Rogers
- Module 4: Changing Roles—WUI Professional Development Program at [www.interfacesouth.org](http://www.interfacesouth.org)

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